



## 2016 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

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**DENVER — Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016** — Gov. John Hickenlooper today delivered his annual State of the State address. The governor's remarks focused on the economy, education, transportation and budget challenges.

Here is the text of the speech as prepared:

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Good morning.

The rosy glow and spring in my step you may have noticed as I entered this Chamber today isn't just due to my recent engagement.

Thank you. I'm a very lucky man. And I know I'm not the only one looking forward to the Broncos beating the Steelers on Sunday.

I'm grateful and excited to be here with you today, in the state Capitol, to kick off our sixth year of work together.

Thank you to our Senate leadership: President Bill Cadman, Majority Leader Mark Scheffel, Minority Leader Lucia Guzman, and Assistant Minority Leader Rollie Heath.

And thank you also to our House leadership: Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, Majority Leader Crisanta Duran, Minority Leader Brian DelGrosso, and Assistant Minority Leader Polly Lawrence.

To all of the members of the Assembly, we thank you for your commitment and service to our state.

Last year, we lost one of Colorado's most beloved public servants and educators – Representative John Buckner. We welcome Janet Buckner to the General Assembly. We know you will bring the same dedication to this chamber and the people of Aurora that your husband brought to his work and his community.

Thank you as well to Attorney General Cynthia Coffman, Secretary of State Wayne Williams, and Treasurer Walker Stapleton.

We are honored to have Vice-Chairwoman Juanita Plentyholes, of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and Councilman Tyson Thompson, of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, joining us this morning. Welcome.

In the house today is U.S. Representative Ed Perlmutter. Thank you for taking a brief respite from the hurly-burly in Washington to be with us.

We're also joined by two of the best mayors in the country: Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers, and Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. Gentlemen, thank you for all that you do for your communities and our state.

We offer our thanks to "The Supremes" – the esteemed members of Colorado's Supreme Court who are in attendance this morning.

We are indebted to the members of our military and law enforcement communities, and to Major General Edwards and the Colorado National Guard, for their service and sacrifice in the pursuit of keeping us safe.

Thank you to my Cabinet and staff, and to all of our state employees, for endeavoring to bring out the best in our government – and in me.

Some months ago, Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia accepted a new position as President of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, which he will begin later this year. Thank you, Joe, for your partnership as Lieutenant Governor, and for your leadership as the Executive Director of the Department of Higher Education.

Soon, we will also bid farewell to Executive Director Mike King. Mike, we thank you for your collaboration and stewardship of the Department of Natural Resources.

I'd also like to give a special shout out to the Department of Personnel & Administration, the legislative staff, and all the employees from Capitol Complex and Colorado companies who have worked so hard to restore these Chambers to their original splendor.

131 years ago, a Democratic Governor and Republican General Assembly came together to enact legislation to build this Capitol.

It was 1885 and Colorado was experiencing a silver boom. Population was around 300,000 and growing by the day. It cost \$2.7 million to build the Capitol back then; today, it would cost a hundred times that.

Originally, the top of the Capitol Dome was to be adorned by a 12-foot high statue of "the most beautiful woman in Colorado."

Despite a clear Republican majority, the legislators couldn't agree on who was, in fact, the most beautiful woman in the state. So they forged a compromise: the crystal sphere known as "the lantern" that tops the building to this day.

They built something to be proud of, that has endured and served generations of Coloradans.

At the beginning of my second term last January, as we took stock of the strength of our state, the promise of the future, and the thorny fiscal thicket that threatens to undermine both, we asked ourselves, *What exactly are we proposing to build for Colorado?*

Colorado is still the Frontier. We're forward thinkers. Risk takers. Innovators.

Self-sufficient, independent and strong. A little wild and a hell of a good time.

Colorado is the place where you can make your own way. This should be as true tomorrow as it is today.

We don't need a DeLorean time machine to know that change is coming. Just 20 years ago, we were using dial-up modems.

We didn't know we would one day be texting more than talking, or that dating would be all about swiping left or right. And cat videos – so many cat videos...

No matter what the future holds  
If you're young or old, what your dream looks like  
Strike gold  
Stone cold  
Colorado is the place where fortune favors the bold  
Colorado is the place where you can chase  
Your American dream.

Colorado is the place.

A vibrant economy, widespread prosperity, a healthy environment. These things don't create themselves. They're created by partnerships.

The State is a partner with business and nonprofits in fostering innovation and growth.

By working together, we can do more for Colorado than any single entity can do on its own.

We call this partnership the Golden Triangle.

Thanks to the investment of our private sector, the collaboration in and beyond this building, and the hard work and innovation of people across Colorado...our Golden Triangle strategy is working, and the state of the state is strong.

We've come a long way in the last 5 years. From budget shortfalls, a stagnant economy and 9 percent unemployment, Colorado now has one of the best economies in the nation.

We're one of the top states for economic growth. One of the best places for business and careers, for quality of life, for health and tourism.

Our economy is projected to continue its steady growth, and we've proven our state government can be an effective facilitator and partner in finding solutions to some of Colorado's greatest challenges.

We now have a comprehensive, statewide Water Plan – the result of unprecedented engagement with over 30,000 people around the state. It's anchored in conservation and powered by innovative solutions to make our water go further, protect our natural environment, and ensure our agriculture and recreation industries keep flourishing.

Now it's time to implement these solutions.

We will work with you to craft legislation that gives the Colorado Water Conservation Board greater flexibility in funding our most important water projects.

We're building on the success of Colorado's \$40 billion dollar agriculture industry to ensure our rural communities realize their full economic potential.

Colorado Blueprint 2.0 is helping regions identify and capitalize on their specific assets. This tenacious bottom-up approach is delivering exciting results.

Today we are happy to announce that Costilla County will soon be home to the Blanca Forestry Products Sawmill, a brand new, built-to-suit commercial facility that will serve southern Colorado and northern New Mexico – creating over 100 jobs in the first year, with the potential to grow by hundreds more by 2020.

To give you an idea of just how big a deal this is, adding 100 jobs in Costilla County is like adding 60,000 jobs in Metro Denver.

In 2013, this body created the REDI grant, which played an integral role in the partnership that brought this project to Colorado.

With us today are County Commissioners Lawrence Pacheco and Joe Gallegos; and Executive Director of the Costilla County Economic Development Council, Robert Rael.

Please join me in congratulating them on their partnership in bringing this new business to Colorado.

Rural Colorado is also plugging into our aerospace industry.

Thanks to strategic outreach aimed at expanding Colorado's space community beyond the I-25 corridor, major Front Range contractors are looking to small businesses around the state and looping them into their supply chain.

Over 50 Colorado companies supplied \$25 million worth of goods and services to one recent Lockheed Martin satellite project.

And it's not just Front Range businesses that are seeing the benefits of rural outreach. Companies like Lewis Engineering in Grand Junction and GenHam Diamond Tooling in Montrose joined forces as a direct result of road trips arranged by the Colorado Space Business Roundtable.

We encourage other industries to follow this lead, to make targeted efforts to do business with Colorado companies and maximize resources statewide.

When you've got it, you've got it. One of the many ways Colorado's got it is Tourism.

In 2014 we hit two all-time tourism records: over 71 million visitors who spent \$18.6 billion in Colorado. That's 7 percent more in spending than 2013.

And we're just hitting our stride. We established the Outdoor Recreation Industry Office to help communities throughout the state grow their recreation business.

We're launching our Rural Jump-Start program this month in Mesa County. Three companies – Colorado Clean, TSW Analytics and ProStar Geocorp – have already applied; we look forward to working with them, and with Colorado Mesa University President, Tim Foster, who is with us today to enhance the competitiveness of Colorado's rural communities.

We're continuing the promising work of our Main Street improvement initiative, and pressing forward on efforts to bring broadband to every corner and corral in Colorado.

We are leveraging federal dollars, state assets and our new telecom law to ensure that all Colorado households, businesses, hospitals and schools – regardless of their location – have access to reliable, affordable broadband.

Since July 2014, we've secured 9,000 new jobs created by companies relocating to Colorado, and existing businesses expanding here. Companies like DaVita, Intel, Reed Group, FiveStars, Gusto and Proximity Malt.

Our considerable talent and resources are a major draw, and perfectly position Colorado to be the national leader in one of the most important emerging industries in the world: cybersecurity intelligence.

On our Trade Mission stop in Israel, the global leader in cybersecurity, we met with experts, researchers and business leaders, to examine the landscape of this new frontier, and crystalize our plans to create the National Cybersecurity Intelligence Center in Colorado.

As we see it, this Center can be the country's foremost authority on cybersecurity research and development, training and education. It will provide real time response capability for businesses to detect, prevent, remediate and recover from threats and hacks.

We propose to establish the Center in Colorado Springs, utilizing the region's impressive concentration of assets, private sector interest, and connection to the University of Colorado Colorado Springs cybersecurity program.

Mayor John Suthers and UCCS Chancellor Pamela Shockley-Zalabak are here with us today. Please join us in thanking them for their collaboration to advance the vision for Colorado's National Cybersecurity Intelligence Center.

Colorado wouldn't be in a position to lead on cybersecurity if we didn't have a highly qualified workforce already plugged into this burgeoning industry.

Developing a world-class talent pipeline is critical to attracting more business and investment in Colorado. But our minority students earn postsecondary degrees at half the rate that our white students do.

When hard-working Coloradans can't afford a path to the middle class, it's a detriment to the entire state. That's why we're working so aggressively, on all sides of the Golden Triangle, to close the Attainment Gap.

There has been no greater champion for "closing the gap" than Joe Garcia; the collaboration he's led throughout the state is a big reason why Colorado is a national leader on the issue.

Our Business and Experiential Learning Commission is building on our concurrent enrollment programs and developing a new model for college and career readiness. It gives students the opportunity to earn college credit, and get professional experience, while simultaneously achieving their high school diplomas.

Students like Jaime Corchado are making the most of our concurrent enrollment programs. Jaime completed an Associate's of Science and prerequisites for an engineering degree while he was in high school at Aurora Central.

He went on to attend the Community College of Aurora, intern at the Kennedy Space Center and graduate from the Colorado School of Mines in 2015 with a bachelor's in engineering physics. Today, Jaime works for Hewlett Packard as a software developer in Fort Collins.

Jaime is the first in his family to go to college. He told us that without the concurrent enrollment program, he might never have been able to get a degree. Our program cut the total cost of earning his bachelor's in half. And now his little brother is planning to follow in Jaime's footsteps.

Please join me in congratulating Jaime on his accomplishments, and for being an inspiration to other young Coloradans.

We'll continue to support concurrent enrollment, as well as high standards and aligned assessments that improve student outcomes and teacher performance.

Last session, you came together and passed bipartisan legislation to reduce testing by 30 hours, so we can accurately measure our kids' progress toward meeting standards without overwhelming them or their teachers.

But there are pivotal moments in our kids' academic careers when we need to know exactly where they stand on the learning curve, so we can adjust course if needed before it's too late. That's why we're standing firm on 9th grade assessments.

It's not going to be easy to meet the challenges we face in advancing our education system: our budget request calls for a \$20 million dollar cut to higher education, and no increase for financial aid.

This is not the direction we want to be moving, but it's a direct result of conflicting budget mandates that are forcing painful choices like this one.

Our economy can't reach its full potential until every Coloradan can be a productive part of it.

When you're poor, it impacts every area of your life – from your health, to your education, to your housing and employment. And it doesn't just affect kids or parents; it affects entire families.

In 2012, nearly one in five kids in Colorado was living in poverty. It's a number we've worked hard to reduce: today it's one in six, and we want to drive those numbers down even more. One of the

approaches we're taking is called Two Generation, or Two-Gen, a comprehensive effort that moves families out of poverty and toward self-reliance.

We ask that you re-authorize ReHire Colorado, a Two-Gen program that helps fathers who owe child support get jobs so they can contribute financially to their kids' well-being.

Our Department of Human Services has received national recognition for its work on Two-Gen, under the leadership of Executive Director Reggie Bicha.

The health of our residents directly impacts our state's economy and our quality of life, which is why we're prioritizing efforts to make Colorado the Healthiest State in the nation.

We're working in concert with our private sector and nonprofit partners to increase access to health services and build on the momentum of our successful statewide initiatives.

Thanks to this collaboration, over 93 percent of Coloradans now have health insurance. As a result, we've seen increases in the use of preventive services and lifesaving screenings, which help keep people healthy and save taxpayers money in the long run.

The Colorado Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline has received over 175,000 calls to date, making it easier to report suspected abuse and get kids the protection they need if they're in an unsafe situation.

Similarly, Colorado's Mental Health Crisis Support Hotline has received tremendous engagement since its launch in August 2014. But in many communities, the stigma around mental health – and lack of access to hands-on services – often prevents people from seeking help.

Through our State Innovation Model, we're working to make it as easy to get support for your mental health as it is to see your primary care doctor.

In 2013, we proposed reforming our civil commitment rules to be consistent with the majority of other states in the country. It's time to get this done, so our healthcare providers are empowered to evaluate and treat people in crisis who pose a threat to themselves or others.

We're also amplifying our work on suicide prevention. Colorado lost 1,058 people to suicide in 2014 – an all-time high for our state.

We're working with the Suicide Prevention Commission, local communities and national experts to figure out why we have the 5th highest suicide rate in the nation, and develop better tools for prevention.

Since 2012, firearm suicides have outpaced the number of Coloradans who die in car crashes. Auto fatalities have dropped to near-historic lows because we prioritized and put resources behind education and safety programs.

We need to put the same kind of effort into increasing awareness of the links between mental health, suicide, and guns.

We're partnering with gun shops, firing ranges and firearm safety instructors on a pilot program to make sure suicide prevention is part of the conversation when addressing gun safety and education.

Another of our priorities is connecting more Coloradans to our natural resources, especially our kids, so they're spending more time in the great outdoors and less time staring at screens.

It's not just the health benefits that come with outdoor activity; it deepens our respect for, and stewardship of, the beautiful natural spaces that set our state apart from any other.

Our Colorado the Beautiful initiative is underway, building a future where, within one generation, every Coloradan will live within a 10 minute walk of a park, trail or vibrant green space.

As part of that effort, our 16 x 16 Trails Project is identifying the 16 most important trail gaps, missing segments and unbuilt trails across the state; enhancing and connecting them to provide better access to the outdoors for everyone.

I might not get to all of these trails this year, but I'm going to try.

And this summer we're rolling out Colorado's first-ever interactive trails map to make it easier for people to plan and experience an outdoor adventure.

When we recognize a threat to our natural environment, we need to take action. Last summer's Gold King Mine spill showed us what can happen when abandoned mines with environmental or safety issues are not properly remediated.

To reduce the risk of another release like Gold King, we are developing a statewide inventory of draining mines to prioritize for clean-up.

Tackling watershed contamination presents a challenge because of federal laws that prevent clean-up efforts that fail to meet anything less than their standards.

We ask that you support our Congressional Delegation's efforts to allow "Good Samaritans" like state agencies, local governments, watershed groups and nonprofits to improve water quality without incurring liability for meeting all federal standards.

Upholding the highest public health and environmental standards, while promoting innovative energy development, is a cornerstone of our energy strategy.

At our altitude, we know better than anyone how important clean air is – and we need to protect it, along with our land and water. That means moving toward a cleaner, more sustainable energy future that is as reliable as what we have now.

Colorado has already risen to this challenge. We're a leader in the pursuit and promise of renewable energy. Sunrun is bringing 800 new solar jobs to our state. And Vestas Wind Systems added 350 new jobs at their Windsor, Brighton and Pueblo facilities.

As we nurture the growth of renewables in Colorado, we'll continue to work with the oil and gas industry to innovate ways of safely and efficiently getting resources out of the ground.

Well before the Clean Power Plan was formalized, we harnessed Colorado innovation to expand renewable energies, and we brokered groundbreaking methane regulations and fracking disclosure rules.



It's all connected. These efforts are important components of the Colorado Climate Plan we released this past fall, which will serve as our framework to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Let's press forward, together, to implement these plans in a way that best serves our state – minimizing costs and capitalizing on new economic opportunities as we power Colorado and protect our environment for generations to come.

As we look to the future, we have to look at some hard realities.

Travel on our highways has increased 42% in the last 20 years. But the capacity of our highway system has only grown 2%. Even an English major like me can do that math. It seems we've discovered the formula for congestion.

Nearly all of CDOT's budget is dedicated to maintaining our current system, which puts critical upgrades out of reach.

Add to the equation 2 million more residents projected to join us over the next 20 years, and we've got a math problem. Our population grew by over 100,000 last year alone, so we need to invest now to ease congestion and mobility for today and tomorrow.

We have transportation issues up and down I-25, along I-70 and other high-volume traffic corridors throughout the state.

If we're going to get these projects done, we must find new funding sources and leverage partnerships to pay for them.

Some have suggested a version of TRANS bonds as an option, but without new revenue, that's like trying to drive your new truck across the state with a dollar's worth of gas.

This is a challenge that will only get more daunting as each day passes. Let's find a way to permanently put new money toward roads so we can truly solve Colorado's transportation problems.

Much like our transportation system, Colorado's housing capacity has not kept pace with our population growth. We don't have enough condos for current residents, let alone for the folks who are moving here.

Demand and rents have skyrocketed. Labor and building material costs continue to rise. These are forces beyond our control, and they're contributing to the problem that's driving the cost of housing out of reach, especially for first-time buyers.

So let's revisit the area that we do have control over to make homeownership more attainable: our old friend "Construction Defects."

It's a complicated issue, but it's too important to give up on. In the absence of State action, eleven different counties and municipalities have passed their own patchwork of ordinances, but we need a statewide solution.

Let's hunker down and craft a law that balances affordability concerns and homeowner rights with businesses' ability to operate.

This year, let's also extend the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit program. These tax credits kickstart financing that communities use to leverage private sector investment in order to house Coloradans experiencing homelessness.

Programs like this are particularly impactful for our veteran homeless population, as we strive to ensure that if veterans experience homelessness, those episodes are rare, brief and non-recurring.

When Coloradans voted to legalize marijuana three years ago, most had no idea how much hard work and collaboration on all sides of this complex issue it would take to build a safe, effective regulatory system from scratch. We have a lot to be proud of, but certain challenges remain.

We should continue to look at lessons learned from alcohol and tobacco as we monitor and update marijuana regulations. Back in the day, candy cigarettes desensitized kids to the dangers of tobacco – and today, pot-infused gummy bears send the wrong message to our kids about marijuana.

Let's ask ourselves if we're doing enough to make sure that edibles do not so closely resemble the same products kids can find in the candy aisle.

We've worked hard to restore Coloradans' faith and trust in good government. We've lowered costs, cut more red tape and updated our technology to improve customer service at every click.

And we're not done yet. Colorado is one of the top destinations for Millennials graduating college, but most of them weren't even alive the last time we updated our procurement rules. We will request legislation to update our procurement code, making it easier for vendors to compete for, and do business with the state.

People believe in their government when it works.

Democracy is messy and imperfect and sometimes it's uncomfortable and ugly. Haters gonna hate. But when democracy works...it's beautiful. It's poetry in motion.

Democracy wasn't designed to be argument-free. It's built on vigorous debate and "give me liberty or give me death" dedication to the principles of freedom and equality.

But democracy also wasn't designed to be combative to its own detriment.

Without compromise, the system stagnates under the weight of so many stalemates.

Right now, our conflicts aren't serving us – conflicts in our state Constitution, in this building, and certainly not in Washington.

We used to take pride in reaching compromise. The framing of the U.S. Constitution. The creation of our interstate highway system. Putting the first two human beings on the moon.

In today's politics, we revel in getting our way without giving an inch, and stopping the other guy from getting anything done.

We've made these the only things that count as wins. And the American people lose.

This "you're either with us or against us" mentality hurts our state and our country, and it undermines our democracy.

This isn't how our founders envisioned it.  
They weren't partisan to the point of paralysis.  
The system worked because they worked together.

Coloradans know how to work together.

When tragedy strikes, we rise above our differences. Fires, floods, unspeakable violence – come what may, we tap into our collective resiliency and build back better and stronger.

*Does it have to get that bad?*

Do the challenges of our current structure have to send us off a cliff before we hold up our side of the Golden Triangle and take action?

Standing in this Chamber, steeped in history, I wonder...

...who really is the most beautiful woman in Colorado?

There's no longer any debate – it's my fiancée Robin Pringle.

But all joking aside – if the state needed a Capitol Building constructed today, would we be able to build it? Could we come together and get it done? Would we even get far enough in the process to debate what to put on top?

We're a state that's equal parts Republican, Democrat and Independent. And one thing is certain: we're never going to wake-up one morning and agree on everything.

But we are all Coloradans – always – not just when tragedy strikes or when we answer a challenge to make kindness top of mind.

Colorado is our community.

Community is what we seek in our neighborhoods; our churches, temples and mosques; around our careers and passions; in the families we build beyond the ones we're born into.

Connecting to and investing in something greater than ourselves.

We realize that aerospace in the Springs and oil and gas on the Western Slope, mountain biking in Durango and ag on the Eastern Plains – no matter where you live in Colorado, these things matter to all of us.

The more every community in Colorado prospers, the more we have as a state to invest in what's working and help find solutions to what isn't.

We're going to continue being a great partner to the people and the private sector.

Because – and this was evident when we talked to people around the state on our community tour last year – whether they believe in government or not, Coloradans want us to keep finding solutions.

To solve the problems that are bigger than any single one of us.

Let's strive, I mean really try, to be more bipartisan this Session. Let's forgo cheap shots in favor of civility and productive dialogue.

Let's use equal parts imagination and reason as we plan for the future.

Investing wisely and strategically in what we want to build for Colorado.

Striking a balance between stability and agility so we can handle whatever comes our way.

We can't control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond. When an unintended side-effect of well-intentioned legislation is undermining our success, we should take action to correct it.

Within our control is the Hospital Provider Fee enterprise designation.

Lawyers are going to disagree. That's what they do. We believe there is a way forward that doesn't violate the Constitution.

If we make this fix, the TABOR limit won't be one penny higher than what voters gave us in Referendum C.

We have enterprises that run lotteries, and build bridges and manage state parks. The one we propose provides services to our health care system that it can't provide on its own – and they want to pay us for them.

If we can't make this very reasonable change – like many already allowed under TABOR – then what choice do we have but to re-examine TABOR?

Right now, no one can say with a straight face that our budget rules are working for us.

Coloradans know we're not fully funding education. They're fed up with traffic congestion, they're fed up with potholes and they're fed up with our inability to expand our highway system.

Virtually every chamber of commerce and editorial board across the state, as well as CACI, Club 20, Action 22 and Progressive 15 all agree that fixing the Hospital Provider Fee makes sense.

Let's fix it and lock-in funding for education and transportation.  
Let's move forward.

Our roads and schools are waiting.

And Coloradans are depending on us, whether they like government or not. Whether they believe in government or not.

Let's get back to the art of compromise and set Colorado up to win.

Let's look past our term limits and work through our differences to build something we can all be proud of – so that in 130 years, Coloradans will look back on what we accomplished here and say "They did us right."

Civility leads to collaboration. Compromise leads to progress. It's the poetry of the system working the way it's supposed to.

It's a pleasure and a privilege to work with you all. I'm optimistic and excited about what we can build together this Session.

So let's get to it!

Thank you. Go Broncos, and God bless the State of Colorado.